THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST UNSCRIPTURAL.

BY PHILO-CHRISTOS.

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus.

—— The Head of Chriſt, *is* God.

St. PAUL.

LONDON:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No 72, St. Paul's Church-yard.

M.DCC.LXXII.

[Price One Shilling and Six Pence.]

See Stebolini Traditions of the
Jews. Eng translat. Vol. 1. p13 - Lond. 1748
That the pre-existence of Christ is
not as of the Law &c is a Jewish
opinion - for "the Branch of the Righteous
" a Hebraism signifying the Messiah
himself. - p. 13 how refers to the
work itself not to the prelim. Discourse

BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the following piece, ſeveral of the arguments of a writer in the *Theological Repoſitory*, of Sept. 1, 1771, who ſigns himſelf BEREANUS, are particularly conſidered: which is the reaſon why his *remarks* upon this ſubject are ſo frequently mentioned.

Should it be aſked, why was not this diſſertation inſerted in the Theological Regiſter?—Beſides its being too large for that work, the anſwer would be, the ſubject is univerſally intereſting: and it is hoped

hoped will have a wider attention given to it in a ſmall pamphlet.—No objection can ariſe to this form of publication, when it is conſidered, that BEREANUS has given the moſt plauſible arguments that have yet been offered for the Pre-exiſtence; which are fairly cited, and decently canvaſſed in the following pages.

THE EDITOR.

THE

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST UNSCRIPTURAL.

THE Pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt is a ſubject, which for many centuries hath found unnumber'd zealous defenders, not only among the Athanaſians, or thoſe who are commonly called the Orthodox, and other Trinitarians; but alſo amongſt the Arians; and is indeed an eſſential part of their ſyſtem.

It is no new obſervation, that the eſpouſers of this ſcheme have, more generally in their arguments, had recourſe to ſchool-wrangling, ſyſtematical prejudice, a veneration for what they term great names, gloſſaries, ſubmiſſion to human and traditional authority, and the like; whilſt the ſacred text, taken in connection, and diveſted of all forced and unjuſt,

or partial interpretation, hath been greatly neglected, and I had almoſt ſaid, intirely left out of the queſtion; tho' they all profeſs to found their opinion upon the ſcriptures.

Therefore in the ſucceeding pages, it is propoſed, to examine the ſcriptures themſelves, and to draw from them, rational and fair deductions.

Bereanus, an advocate for the pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt, begins his remarks thus,—" One of the moſt diſtinguiſhing " paſſages relating to this point is in " Phil. ii. 6, &c." And it muſt be confeſſed he hath, upon the whole, treated the ſubject in a grave and ſober manner; endeavouring to ſupport his ſide of the argument with obſervations, which, at the firſt view, ſeem to carry a ſpecious and plauſible appearance. However, *Bereanus* himſelf acknowledges, in p. 154. *— " it " is not ſurpriſing, if our Saviour's pre- " exiſtence and humiliation are liable to " ſome objections."

His deſire to appear a juſt and candid reaſoner, extorted from him this conceſſion. But he preſently takes courage, and adds, " Yet all of them, I think, admit of a

* Theological Repoſitory, Sept. 1, 1771.

" rational ſolution." He is likewiſe not a little ſanguine, and confident, that his arguments are concluſive. This will by and by appear obvious to all his readers.

Bereanus having thus introduced his ſubject, ſays, " Moſt learned men, I ſup-
" poſe, are ſenſible, that our tranſlation
" of ſome of the expreſſions which St.
" Paul hath uſed, is far from being juſt."
He then gives the literal verſion; and a little after, the following paraphraſe.
" Who being in a god-like condition, in
" the heavenly world, was not deſirous to
" continue in ſuch a god-like ſtate; but
" diveſted himſelf of his glory, aſſumed
" humanity in a very mean and low con-
" dition, and being thus brought into the
" ſtate of a man, he humbled himſelf
" yet more, by ſubmitting even to death,
" the (painful and ignominious) death of
" crucifixion." To which he adds, " This
" illuſtration ſeems quite natural. It of-
" fers not the leaſt violence to any one of
" the expreſſions, which the Apoſtle hath
" uſed, but gives to each its plain and li-
" teral meaning."

I freely acknowledge, I cannot view this paraphraſe in the ſame light with *Bereanus*. What authority has he to ſay, " in
" the heavenly world?" for although he

was obliged to make uſe of that expreſſion to ſupport his ſcheme of pre-exiſtence ;—he might as well have ſaid, *from all eternity*,—which he ſeems ſtudiouſly to avoid.

Nor can I think with him, that ſuch an illuſtration ſeems quite natural either to the Apoſtle's expreſſions, or to the doctrine wherein he was inſtructed, and which he himſelf taught.

Pray let us conſider the text in Bereanus's own words, " Who being in the " form of God, did not look upon likeneſs to God as a thing to be coveted ; " but emptied himſelf, and took the form " of a ſervant."

True ; Jeſus did appear among men in the form of God, (and, that he did appear ſo, ſhall be ſhewn by and by ;) but he never arrogated to himſelf the title of, or affected an equality or likeneſs to God. On the contrary, he diveſted himſelf ſo far of the power and authority which God had given him, that he took upon him the form of a ſervant.

In this view the Apoſtle's language is harmonious with what he had juſt before ſaid, " —in lowlineſs (or humbleneſs) of " mind, let each eſteem other better than " themſelves.——Let this mind be in you,

" which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; who " being in the form of God, &c."

St. Paul's ſentiments will be clearly ſeen, by conſidering a few texts taken from his own writings in different Epiſtles, and alſo in the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles.

He ſays, in his Epiſtle to the Romans, ch. i. 3, 4. " —Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, " which was made of the ſeed of David " according to the fleſh, and declared or " determined to be the ſon of God with " power, according to the ſpirit of holi- " neſs, by the reſurrection from the dead." Not declared to be the ſon of God with power, from his having been in a pre-exiſtent ſtate of glory.

Again, in his Epiſtle to the Epheſians, ch. i. 19, and onwards, where ſpeaking of the exceeding greatneſs of the power of God, he ſays, " which he wrought in " Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the " dead, and ſet him at his own right " hand," &c. In which there is no mention of Jeſus Chriſt's having (as ſent of God) left a ſtate of glory to become man; but that the power of God was ſeen when he raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, &c.

And when it is ſaid, Heb. i. 2. " By " whom alſo he made the worlds," or

ages; about which *Bereanus* is ſomewhat particular, and ſeems to lay no little ſtreſs, p. 144.—It may undoubtedly be underſtood very rationally to ſignify that God by the manifeſtation of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, completed, or finiſhed, (not created) the ages. Or in other words, that by and in him was given the laſt and finiſhing diſpenſation of the grace, goodneſs, and love of God to mankind. See the Apoſtle's whole argument, which begins thus, "God who at ſundry times, "and in divers manners, ſpake in times "paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, "hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us "by his ſon, whom he hath appointed heir "of all things, by whom alſo he made "the worlds."

Nor muſt I omit to obſerve, that to *make* of twain one new man, Eph. ii. 15, ſignifies, the uniting of the Jew and the Gentile to himſelf.

St. Paul likewiſe tells Timothy, that, "without controverſy, great is the my-"ſtery of godlineſs; God was manifeſt "in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen "of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, "believed on in the world, received up "into glory." 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Now there is not ſo much as a ſingle word

word in this catalogue concerning the pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt; which St. Paul would certainly have communicated to Timothy, had he believed, or known any thing of that matter.

Again, it may properly be aſked, how does it appear that St. Paul had any knowledge, or even idea of the pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt; ſince no ſuch thing is in the leaſt hinted at by him, although ſo fair an opportunity offered, when he preached to the Athenians from *Mars* hill? St. Paul was never backward in urging any thing to the exaltation of the character of his Lord and maſter, the Meſſiah. And yet, all that he mentions of Chriſt, is, that God "hath appointed a day in the "which he will judge the world in righte-"ouſneſs, by THAT MAN whom he hath "ordained, whereof he hath given aſ-"ſurance unto all men, in that he hath "raiſed him from the dead." Acts xvii. 31.

He does not ſay, God would judge the world by him who once enjoyed a ſtate of glory, but diveſted himſelf thereof to become man. Than which, nothing could have more engaged the attention of the Athenians; who venerated every thing which was wonderful, or had but the ſhadow of a claim to divinity.

It were eaſy to cite many more paſſages out of St. Paul's writings, to ſhew, that he was unacquainted with the doctrine of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence.

But I paſs on to obſerve, St. Peter likewiſe appears to have been wholly ignorant of that matter. For his ſermon on the day of Pentecoſt, [to an audience made up, as it is expreſſed, of *men out of every nation under heaven,*] begins in this manner: "Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words; "Jeſus of Nazareth, *a man* approved of "God among you, by miracles, wonders, "and ſigns, which God did by him in "the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo "know; him, being delivered by the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of "God, ye have taken, and by wicked "hands have crucified and ſlain." Acts ii. 22, 23. How aggravated would their guilt have appeared, and how would the character of Jeſus have been advanced, had the apoſtle informed them, that this ſame Jeſus of Nazareth was a far greater Being, than they imagined; even one, who long before he was made man, enjoyed a divine ſtate of bleſſedneſs and glory; but, that for their benefit he left his divinity in heaven, ſubmitted to be born of a woman,

and

and at laſt, to ſuffer a moſt cruel and ſhameful death!

But it ſeems St. Peter knew of nothing relative to Chriſt that was pre-exiſtent, ſave the *determinate counſel and fore-knowledge of God.*

He likewiſe, in his firſt Epiſtle, calls Chriſt "a lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot; who verily was fore-ordained "before the foundation of the world, but "was manifeſt in theſe laſt times for you." 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

Not, that he exiſted any more than was ſlain, from or before the foundation of the world. Rev. xiii. 8.

As to the expreſſion in ch. iii. ver. 19. "By which alſo, (i. e. by the ſpirit) he "went and preached unto the ſpirits in "priſon;" which hath been urged as a proof that he was in being before he was born of the virgin. I profeſs it does not appear to me as it hath been commonly received, that it was Chriſt who went and preached; ſince then he muſt have appeared among the antediluvians, as well as he did afterwards at Jeruſalem.

But here it will be ſaid, "he went by "the Spirit."

I anſwer, this would not deſtroy his perſonality—

perſonality—for he was led by the Spirit into the wilderneſs. Mat. iv. 1.

In ſhort, by this paſſage, I underſtand the Apoſtle to be drawing a kind of parallel, that like as Chriſt, who really had with him, and always taught by the Spirit of God; ſo Noah, by the ſame Spirit, was a preacher of righteouſneſs to the old and diſobedient world.

I therefore proceed to obſerve; that St. John ſays, "In the beginning was the "word, and the word was with God, and "the word was God." ch. i. 1.

Now I readily confeſs, that Chriſt, who is ſaid by St. Paul to be "the power of "God and the wiſdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24, may be eminently ſtiled, *the* WORD; inaſmuch as by, or through him was manifeſted the divine mind, will, and good pleaſure of the *Father* to all his rational creation; particularly to his *own* people the Jews, though his *own* received him not.

A very judicious reaſoner, upon this opening of St. John's hiſtory, writes thus, "There is, ſays he, no kind of difficul-"ty found in this repreſentation; for the "manifeſtative will of God, was not only "*in the beginning*, but had been ever *with* "*God*,

" *God*, and muſt be venerated, *as God*. " This very ſame idea St. Paul conveys, " when he obſerves, *that the inviſible* " *things of him from the creation of the* " *world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood* " *by the things that are made, even his* " *eternal power and godhead.* In which " obvious ſenſe, the WORD may be ſaid " to be God, and alſo to be in the be- " ginning with him; inaſmuch *as all things* " *were made by him; and without him was* " *not any thing that was made.* In other " words, not any thing could come into " exiſtence, but what would manifeſt the " will of the Creator." See *another defence of the Unity*, p. 2, 3.

Thus, by the manifeſtation of the will of God, " was life, and the life was the " light of men." John i. 4.

But to ſay the λογος was a divine eternal ſomething, which reſided with Jeſus Chriſt in a pre-exiſtent ſtate of glory and bleſſedneſs, by which he, in conjunction with the Father, made, or created and formed all things; and that this ſame λογος, when Jeſus Chriſt came down from heaven, ſupplied in him the place of an human ſoul, making of him thereby neither perfect God, nor perfect man; never entered into the mind of the Evangeliſt.

And

And let me add, if St. John intended to declare or ſignify the pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt, when he ſays, in his firſt Epiſtle, ch. iv. 9, " —that God ſent his " only begotten ſon into the world;" we muſt infer alſo, from ch. i. ver. 6, of his goſpel, that John the Baptiſt (that witneſs of the light) had a claim to, or was once in a ſtate of pre-exiſtence alſo; for he ſays, " There was a man *ſent from* " *God*, whoſe name was John *."

But let us attend a little to Chriſt's own declarations; and I am perſuaded we ſhall find

* I might obſerve further, that the harbinger calls Jeſus, *a man*; " This is he of whom I ſaid, after me " cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was " before me." John i 30. Now, it is *character*, and not *time*, that is concerned in this place. Hear what the *Baptiſt* himſelf ſays, " I indeed baptize you with water " to repentance, but he that cometh after me, is mightier " than I, whoſe ſhoes I am not worthy to bear;" and then he proceeds to give the reaſon why Jeſus is mightier than he, and preferred before (or above) him—" he ſhall " baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt, and with fire. Whoſe " fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his " floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but will " burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Mat. iii. 11, 12. Therefore in no other view than ſuperiority of character does St. John quote the words of our Lord's fore runner. Had the harbinger, who was thus divinely acquainted with our Lord's diſtinguiſhing character, any knowledge or idea of his pre-exiſtence; he certainly would have declared it, to give energy to what he had juſt been advancing.—And when he ſays, ver. 14. " I have need

" to

find therein nothing, more than in thoſe of his Apoſtles, to ſupport or countenance the notion of his pre-exiſtence.

Our Lord ſays to Philip, " He that " hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father." John xiv. 9. See alſo ch. xii. 45. But we are aſſured, this was never intended to convey the idea, that whoever had ſeen Jeſus Chriſt, had literally ſeen the one ſupreme and inviſible God. For this, as *Bereanus* himſelf confeſſes, " ſubverts the " very foundation of true religion, *viz.* " the unity of God."

No, we are inſtructed in the true ſpirit and meaning of this remarkable paſſage, by John i. 18. " No man hath ſeen God " at any time; the only begotten ſon " which is in the boſom (or ſecret coun- " ſel) of the Father, he hath declared " him :" i. e. made known his will.

So thoſe other expreſſions, " I and my

" to be baptized of thee, and comeſt thou to me?" he evidently refers, not to any pre-exiſtence of Chriſt; but to his power, as the ſent of God, to baptize with the Holy Ghoſt, &c. Neither did the harbinger look upon Chriſt as God, for his language is, " After me cometh " a man, &c. And St. John ſays, " God ſent his only " begotten ſon into the world." Could he then who was begotten, and who was ſent, be the ſame being who did beget, and ſend him? One would imagine ſuch a queſtion to be indeed impertinent. How then could the Lord Jeſus be God his Father?

" Father

" Father are one—I am in the Father, " and the Father in me," and ſuch like; can only mean, that Jeſus perſevered, without the leaſt deviation, in accompliſhing the great work whereunto his Father had appointed him: and, that he had the ſpirit and power of God accompanying him in all his operations, and in all his teachings. Or, in other words, that whatever the Supreme Being had planned, of his unbounded goodneſs, for the benefit of mankind, was perfected and finiſhed in the diſplay of his love by the revelation of the man Chriſt Jeſus; who faithfully executed his heavenly miſſion, even unto death. Hence he could ſay, " I have " glorified thee on earth—I have finiſhed " the work which thou gaveſt me to do."

Farther, our Lord expreſsly declares, " I can of mine own ſelf do nothing." John v. 30. " I ſeek not mine own will, " but the will of the Father which hath " ſent me." " —My Father is greater " than I." ch. xiv. 28.—" As the Father " gave me commandment, even ſo I do." ver. 31. And when he taught his diſciples to pray, it was in this language, " Our Father who art in heaven." Mat. iv. 9. " Pray to thy Father which " is in ſecret." Ver. 6. And again, " Whatſoever

" ſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, (i. e. " as my diſciples) that will I do." John xiv. 13; which expreſſion is well explained by ver. 16. " I will pray the Father."

Now as none of the above declarations of Jeſus Chriſt do, in reality, ſupport that fundamental and favourite doctrine of the *Athanaſians*, namely, the co-equality of the Father and of the Son; ſo neither do they at all countenance the *Arian* hypotheſis of our Lord's pre-exiſtence.

That he was not pre-exiſtent, will yet more fully appear, by conſidering the higheſt characters which he ever aſſumed; or that are given of him by the ſacred writers of his hiſtory.

I begin with the term, *Son of God.*

Jeſus calls God, his Father, John x. 29. which expreſſion is clearly explained in ver. 34 and 35. So that he made uſe of that phraſe to teſtify to the Jews, that the word of God was come to him; and that he was ſanctified of the father. Ver. 36.

Well, but he ſays of himſelf, " I pro- " ceeded forth, and came from God; " neither came I of myſelf, but he ſent " me." John viii. 42. Does not this prove his pre-exiſtence?—

By no means. For he did proceed forth, and

and come from God, when, by an immediate Almighty power, he was conceived in the womb of the virgin.

And pleaſe to obſerve, that when the Apoſtle, ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt, ſays, " —a body haſt thou prepared me;" Heb. x. 5. it cannot by fair interpretation have any other meaning, than, that Chriſt's body was formed by the divine power of God, without the inſtrumentality of man.

And St. John ſaith, " —every ſpirit that " confeſſeth that Jeſus Chriſt is come in " the fleſh, is of God." 1 John iv. 2. He does not ſay, *every ſpirit that confeſſeth Jeſus Chriſt* left a prior ſtate of glory, *and is come in the fleſh, or hath taken fleſh upon him, is of God.*

Farther, when the high prieſt aſked him, " Art thou the Chriſt, the ſon of the " bleſſed?" Jeſus ſaid, " I am; and ye " ſhall ſee the ſon of man ſitting on the " right hand of power, and coming in " the clouds of heaven." Mark xiv. 62. Declaring thereby, that he was indeed the anointed of God; and to ſhew his greatneſs, telling them what was to be his reward. But gave not the leaſt hint to aggrandize his character, that he left the heavenly glory he was poſſeſſed of, and became the ſon of man.—Than which nothing

thing could have been more pertinent, as it would have anſwered the obſervation of the Jews,—"We know this man whence "he is; but when Chriſt cometh, no "man knoweth whence he is." John vii. 27.

Again, Jeſus is called "the ſon of "God," Luke i. 35. on account of his miraculous conception. "The Holy "Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the "power of the higheſt ſhall overſhadow "thee; therefore alſo that holy thing "which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be "called the ſon of God."

Note, The angel did not inform Mary, that by the Holy Ghoſt coming upon her a pre-exiſtent Being ſhould quit his ſtate of glory, enter into her womb, and afterwards be born; and that *therefore* that holy thing ſhould be called the ſon of God. No; it was intimated to her, that by the immediate power and influence of the ſpirit of God, ſhe ſhould conceive, and *therefore* that perſon which ſhould be born of her, ſhould be called, the ſon of God *.

* St. Luke calls Adam the ſon of God; not on account of his pre-exiſtence, but that he, like the man Chriſt Jeſus, was formed and made by the immediate creative power of God. The word *ſon* is indeed in this place ſupplied, and it is neither unneceſſary, nor wrong.

Jeſus was alſo called the ſon of God by his diſciples, upon his miraculouſly ſaving Peter, who was beginning to ſink; and upon making the boiſterous wind to ceaſe: See Matt. xiv. 21 and 33. but not from any idea of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence.

And John the Baptiſt bare record that Jeſus was the ſon of God, when he ſaw the ſpirit of God deſcending and remaining upon him. See John i. 32, 34.

Nathanael likewiſe called Jeſus the ſon of God. John i. 49. Not becauſe he believed him to have been pre-exiſtent; but becauſe he found he was endowed with a ſupernatural and divine diſcernment. For Jeſus had ſaid unto him, "Before that "Philip called thee when thou waſt un-"der the fig-tree, I ſaw thee."

Farther; Jeſus is called the *only begotten* ſon of God.

In *a Letter, writ in the year* 1730, p. 29, it is ſaid, "*Only begotten* and *well* "*beloved ſon*, are equivalent." But beſide that, it may be obſerved, Jeſus was the only begotten ſon of God, without a figure, if St. Luke's account of the conception be true. Yet where do the ſacred writings inform us, that he was "begot-"ten of his Father before all worlds?" The admitting what St. Peter ſays, which

I will

I will readily do, namely, " he was fore-
" ordained before the foundation of the
" world; but manifeſt in theſe laſt times—"
1 Pet. i. 20. affords no aid to the pre-
exiſtent ſcheme; ſince what is declared
therein, is no more than that Chriſt was
fore-ordained, not that he actually exiſted
before the foundation of the world.

St. Paul likewiſe inſtructs the Galati-
ans, " when the fulneſs of time was come,
" God ſent forth his ſon made of a wo-
" man, made under the law." Gal. iv. 4.
Therefore Chriſt did not exiſt before God
ſent him forth, when he had made him
of a woman, and after the Law was in
being.

St. John calls him " the *firſt begotten*
from the dead:" See Apoc. i. 5. compared
alſo with what St. Paul ſays, 1 Cor. xv. 20.
But he does not ſay, he was the firſt be-
gotten from eternity, or before all worlds.

Well, but does not Jeſus himſelf ſay,
" Before Abraham was, I am?" (or as
Grotius reads, I was) John viii. 58. And
" your father Abraham rejoiced to ſee my
" day; and he ſaw it and was glad."
ver. 56. Can any thing be more expreſ-
ſive than this, that Chriſt had an exiſ-
tence before he was conceived of the
virgin?

Here it ſhould be obſerved, Jeſus, when he made that declaration, was converſing with his countrymen the Jews, who ſprang from, and made their boaſt in, Abraham; and therefore pointed out himſelf the Meſſiah promiſed as his ſeed. And this could not fail to appear much more intereſting to them, than if he had ſaid, *When Adam was, I was.* Which yet, he might, with equal propriety and truth have done, for it is univerſally received, that Gen. iii. 15. had reſpect to the diſpenſation of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, i. e. to him as the promiſed ſeed, who ſhould bruiſe the head of the Serpent. In which reſpect, and no other, could it be ſaid by Chriſt, the anointed king, though his kingdom was not of this world, "Before Abraham was, "I am."

And the latter expreſſion fully confirms this interpretation; "Your father "Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day; and "he ſaw it, and was glad." About which, it is ſomething wonderful to me there ſhould be any difficulty. For faithful Abraham did in effect ſee it, inaſmuch as he had the *promiſe* renewed to him, that in his ſeed, or in him, ſhould "all nations "be bleſſed." Gal. iii. 8. or as it is written, "—in thee ſhall all families of the "earth

" earth be bleſſed." Gen. xii. 3. i. e. all who ſhall believe in and obey him, that promiſed ſeed.

Thus Abraham might truly be ſaid to have ſeen the day of Jeſus Chriſt, " the " faithful witneſs," and to have rejoiced therein. But how the above ſupports the idea of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence, I confeſs I am intirely at a loſs to conceive; notwithſtanding it is frequently cited for that very purpoſe.

Nor can I refrain from obſerving that *Bereanus* on this paſſage, ſee p. 146. is rather futile than manly, when he ſays, " It is difficult to account for our Savi- " our's uſing this language, if he had " not exiſted before Abraham, ſince it " had ſo naturally betrayed them (that is, " the Jews) into an error, and encreaſed " their hatred of him."

Further, In the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, ch. xiii. 8. it is thus written, " Jeſus " Chriſt, the ſame yeſterday, and to-day, " and forever."

'Tis true; but this has nothing to do with the pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt, any otherwiſe than by metonymy; ſo that the perſon or name of Jeſus Chriſt, is uſed for his teachings, or doctrine—which indeed were eternal truths. And this the

context manifeſtly and directly points out to us; as will immediately be ſeen by conſulting ver. 7. which runs thus, "Re- "member them who have the rule over "you, who have ſpoken unto you *the* "*word of God*, whoſe faith follow, con- "ſidering the end of their converſation."

Now every one knows, the end of their converſation could not be Jeſus Chriſt in any poſſible view than that of his precepts, doctrine, commandments, and examples.

Similar hereunto alſo are the words of Chriſt himſelf, when he ſays, "I am the "living bread which came down from "heaven." John vi. 5.

Upon which I ſhall only remark, that he muſt read with very little attention, or diſcover a very perverſe ſpirit, who can ever imagine any thing more than the heavenly life-giving doctrine of Jeſus was meant thereby.

But once more, that I may not be ſaid to have concealed what the advocates for the pre-exiſtence never fail to urge as an unanſwerable argument in favour of their ſcheme. And doubtleſs, the expreſſion is very important. It is this, "*What* and if "ye ſhall ſee the ſon of man aſcend up "where he was before?" John vi. 62.

Bereanus,

Bereanus, upon this remarkable paſſage, reaſons thus; " As he had been treating, " in this diſcourſe, of his coming down " from Heaven, it is reaſonable to be- " lieve, he had that in his thoughts, when " he ſpoke of aſcending where he was " before, and, conſequently, that he had " actually been in Heaven. If he had " never been there, what end could ſuch " an expreſſion have anſwered? It cer- " tainly had a ſtrong tendency to lead " men into a miſtake. Such a tendency, " as few perſons of ſimplicity could, in " my judgement, be ſuppoſed able to " reſiſt." p. 145, &c.

I am very ſenſible this paſſage in our Lord's hiſtory has been generally underſtood as relative to his aſcenſion into Heaven. And if it muſt be ſo taken, I ſhould ſuppoſe it intended to convey the following idea, viz. that ere long, Chriſt would aſcend to Heaven, to his Father, where or with whom he indeed was, in his ſpirit, before he had this converſation; even from his baptiſm, when the ſpirit of God deſcended upon him. And was, as if Chriſt had ſaid, " Although you are now offend- " ed at me, and will not receive my words; " what and if ſome of you ſhall ſee me " perſonally aſcend up where my Father

" is, and where I, in my ſpiritual inter-
" courſe, was before this preſent time,
" even from the very beginning of my
" adminiſtration; for at my baptiſm I
" was declared to be his beloved ſon —
" will you then believe the truths which
" I now tell you?"

But let us take a farther review of this very remarkable expreſſion; and I am firmly of opinion it will be found capable of a yet more rational ſolution; and, that it did not at all relate to our Lord's aſcenſion into Heaven.

What ſeemed moſt to ſtrike, and offend the Jews, and many of the diſciples in this diſcourſe, was, Chriſt's declaration— " the bread that I will give, is my fleſh,
" which I will give for the life of the
" world—Whoſo eateth my fleſh, and
" drinketh my blood hath eternal life—
" for my fleſh is meat indeed, and my
" blood is drink indeed." By which, as the defenders of the pre-exiſtence will allow, plainly ſignified, that he ſhould certainly ſuffer and die. But when our Lord perceived that theſe and the like figurative expreſſions, ſuch as, " If any
" man eat of this bread, he ſhall live for
" ever—he that eateth me, even he ſhall
" live by me,"—&c. were accounted

" hard

" hard ſayings;" he proceeded to point out to them, ſomething much more aſtoniſhing than the giving, or yielding up his life: For he directed them to the view of his RESURRECTION from the dead.

Therefore he ſaid to them, (what will you think of me) " if ye ſhall ſee *the ſon* " *of man* * aſcend up where he was be- " fore? It is the Spirit that quickeneth, " the fleſh profiteth nothing; the words " that I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit, " and they are life."

Again, which ſhould not be forgotten, This very intereſting expreſſion of our Lord, was not made, or directed only, or immediately to the twelve; but to the whole company of the Jews and Diſciples then preſent.—Alſo, that after his reſurrection, Jeſus was actually ſeen upon the earth again, for forty days together. So St. *Luke* informs us, Acts i. 3,—where he did eat and drink, converſed with, and gave directions to his Apoſtles. And St. Paul aſſures us, he was ſeen of above five hundred brethren at once. 1 Cor. xv. 6. So that moſt probably, he was ſeen, where he was before, by many of thoſe who had

* Note, There was a ſingular propriety and energy in Chriſt's ſtyling himſelf, in this place, ſon of man, rather than ſon of God.

heard

heard this diſcourſe, though at that time, they went back, and walked no more "with him."—Whereas, at what is uſually called his aſcenſion, none but the Apoſtles were with him, whom he led to Bethany to the Mount of Olives, and was there parted from them as he was bleſſing them.

Neither was it the Apoſtles that were offended at this ſaying of Chriſt, nor did they leave him thereon. For Peter ſaid, "Lord, to whom ſhall we go? thou haſt "the words of eternal life." Ver. 68. They had been inſtructed by Chriſt himſelf, "that the ſon of man muſt ſuffer "many things, and be rejected of the "Elders, and of the Chief Prieſts, and "Scribes, and be killed, and after three "days riſe again." Mark viii. 31. See alſo Luke xxiv. 44—46.

Therefore, as this expreſſion of our Lord ſeems by no means to have related to his aſcenſion into Heaven, but only to his reſurrection from the dead; ſo neither does it, in the leaſt, countenance the notion of his pre-exiſtence.

But I paſs on, to obſerve farther,

That Jeſus Chriſt being *in the form of God—emptying himſelf, taking upon him the form*

form of a ſervant—and being found in faſhion as a man; are no proofs whatever of his having been in a pre-exiſtent, heavenly ſtate of glory.

Of his being in THE FORM OF GOD.

I ſhall not dwell long upon this expreſſion; ſince by the form of God, can never ſurely be underſtood to mean God himſelf *. Nay, *Bereanus*, as obſerved above, will not allow Jeſus Chriſt to have been the one infinite and eternal God—conſequently, he cannot mean by the phraſe, *form of God*, applied to Jeſus, that he actually poſſeſſed any one of his incommunicable attributes. From which, we are neceſſarily led to conclude, that he could no otherwiſe be in the form of God, than as he was diſtinguiſhed from all the reſt of God's creation, in a variety of inſtances, and by having the Divine preſence and power accompanying him in all his amazing works and operations. However, it will be neceſſary to advert to a few particulars.

Firſt, When the form of God is aſcribed to Jeſus Chriſt, it moſt aſſuredly ſignifies, that through the Divine power

* It wholly contradicts even common ſenſe, to call any thing whatever the form or image of itſelf.

given to him of working miracles, which, in proof of his heavenly miſſion, he was enabled to perform, he was, *as God himſelf*, the healer, reſtorer, and preſerver of mankind.

Even Nicodemus hath furniſhed us with a right clue to underſtand how Jeſus came from, and appeared like God, by ſaying, "No man can do theſe miracles that thou "doeſt, except God be with him." John iii. 2 *.

Secondly, Jeſus Chriſt did appear in the form of God, by his knowledge and declaration of future events; and more particularly by his acquaintance with the moſt ſecret thoughts, deſigns, and intentions of men. For "he knew what was in man," John ii. 25.

* I readily grant, that the power of Jeſus to work miracles, did not *alone* conſtitute his being in the form of God; yet ſurely it muſt be granted, that ſuch a power was not foreign, but did indeed belong to, and make part of that form.

Bereanus, it is true, will not allow, that Jeſus emptied himſelf of the form of God, if that expreſſion denotes the miraculous powers, which were beſtowed upon him when he began his miniſtry. See p. 137. Yet in the next page, he owns, "They (i. e. miracles) were the power "of God."

Therefore, according to this argument, Jeſus was poſſeſſed of the power, or the form of God, even after he had emptied himſelf of that form, and had taken upon him the form of a ſervant. How is this reconcileable?

And,

And, to mention no more,

Thirdly, He ſuſtained the character, or form of God, in a degree which far ſurpaſſed all others, even by his unbounded love to man; in that he enlightened their minds, led them into all truth, and ſhewed them the way to everlaſting life and happineſs, by his divine inſtructions, rules, precepts, promiſes, and example.

St. John gives this teſtimony of Chriſt, "the word was made fleſh, and dwelt "among us [and we beheld his glory, the "glory as of the only begotten of the "Father] full of grace and truth," that is, full of true grace. John i. 14. And again, "Of his fulneſs we have all received, and grace for grace," (or grace upon grace) "the law was given by Moſes, "but grace and truth, (or true grace) "came by Jeſus Chriſt." Ver. 16, 17.

Now, if theſe things diſcover not the form of God; or as St. Paul, ſpeaking of Chriſt, ſays, "Who is the image of God," 2 Cor. iv. 4. and Col. i. 15. I confeſs it is utterly impoſſible for me to conceive of the meaning of that expreſſion. For as to the eternity, immenſity, and other ſuch like attributes of the one Jehovah, no Being, how highly exalted ſo ever, could poſſibly be poſſeſſed of; (they being, as

before

before hinted, incommunicable ;) therefore ſuch a form of God could no way belong to the man Chriſt Jeſus—nor do the ſacred writings any where give us ſuch an intimation.

But ſurely they ſufficiently authorize us to ſay, that Jeſus was endowed with ſuch a ſpirit and power of God, as deſcribed above, and conſequently, that he really appeared among men in the form of God —and this without the leaſt idea of his having been in a pre-exiſtent ſtate of glory.

Beſides, the participle *Being* does not neceſſarily ſuppoſe that Chriſt before his conception in the womb of the virgin *had been* in the form of God, μορφη Θεϖ ὑπαρχων; but that he was ſo during the time of his miniſtration among men, doing the will of his Father who ſent him.

And thus I am naturally led to conſider, in what manner Jeſus Chriſt, being in the form of God, did empty, or diveſt himſelf thereof, and take upon him the form of a ſervant.

This he did, inaſmuch as notwithſtanding he had the ſpirit of God without meaſure, or, which is exactly the ſame thing, the divine preſence conſtantly enabling him, *who was the brightneſs of his Father's glory,*

glory, and the expreſs image, or character of his perſon, both to ſpeak and to act ſo as never man did, either before or ſince; yet he never affected or aſſumed the character of deity; but on the contrary, taught humility by his own example. His language was, "I muſt work the works "of him that ſent me.—" John ix. 4.—"The ſon of man came not to be mi-"niſtered unto, but to miniſter." Mat. xx. 28. And how amazingly did he ſuſtain the character of a ſervant of God, in that unparallel'd ſubmiſſion under the moſt agonizing proſpect ever experienced! "O my "Father, if this cup may not paſs away "from me, except I drink it, thy will be "done." Mat. xxvi. 42.—St. Mark is yet rather more expreſſive: "And he ſaid, "Abba, Father (i. e. Father, Father) "all things are poſſible unto thee, take "away this cup from me; nevertheleſs "not what I will, but what thou wilt." Mark xiv. 36.

Again, the humble Jeſus declares, "My "meat is to do the will of him that ſent "me, and to finiſh his work." John iv. 34. And "I can of mine own ſelf do nothing—"I ſeek not mine own will, but the will "of the Father who hath ſent me." Ch. v. 30. So when he cured the man that was born

born blind, he confeſſed it was " that the " works of God (or great and excellent " works) ſhould be made manifeſt in " him—" immediately ſubjoining, " I " muſt work the works of him that ſent " me." Ch. ix. 3, 4.

And although our Lord ſaid, " Therefore " doth my Father love me, becauſe I lay " down my life, that I might take it " again. No man taketh it from me, " but I lay it down of myſelf; I have " power to lay it down, and I have power " to take it again :"—yet, in the very next words he acknowledges, " This com- " mandment have I received of my Fa- " ther." John x. 17, 18.

Could Jeſus Chriſt have done nothing of all this, except he had been pre-exiſtent? The mind revolts at the queſtion.

But farther. Our Lord being found in condition (or in faſhion) as a man, he aſſumed no other character; yet, even as man, he humbled himſelf, and became, or took upon him not only the form of a ſervant, but, with the moſt ſubmiſſive reſignation, bore the baſeſt, and the groſſeſt indignities; for " when he was reviled, " he reviled not again, when he ſuffered, " he threatened not—." And when he was betrayed, he ſaid to the diſciple

ciple that would have defended him with his ſword, " — Put up again thy ſword " into its place — Thinkeſt thou that I " cannot now pray to my Father, and " he ſhall preſently give me more than " twelve legions of angels; but how then " ſhall the ſcriptures be fulfilled, that thus " it muſt be?" Mat. xxvi. 52—54.

Nor is there the leaſt neceſſity or occaſion to ſuppoſe, by the expreſſions " who be- " ing in the form of God — but emptied " himſelf," &c. — that the Lord Jeſus did actually diveſt himſelf of any pre-exiſtent glory which he had enjoyed in the heavenly world, and in the preſence of the Father. For this ſame Jeſus, who was " filled with " wiſdom, and the grace of God was upon " him;" Luke ii. 40. — " upon whom alſo " the Holy Ghoſt deſcended in a bodily " ſhape;" Ch. iii. 2. — who declared in the ſynagogue, that that day was fulfilled in their ears the ſcripture where it is written, " the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, " becauſe he hath anointed me to preach " the goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me " to heal the broken-hearted, to preach " deliverance to the captives, and recover- " ing of ſight to the blind, to ſet at li- " berty them that are bruiſed, to preach " the acceptable year of the Lord." Ch.

iv. 18, &c.—Whom alſo the apoſtle Paul calls, "the power of God, and the wiſdom "of God." 1 Cor. i. 24. And again, when writing to the Coloſſians, he ſaith, "In him "dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead "bodily; and ye are compleat in him, "which is the head of all principality and "power:" Ch. ii. 9, 10 *.—whoſe ſupernatural conception, and preſervation from the cruelty of Herod were ſo wonderful—and who had once and again the divine teſtimony, "This is my beloved ſon:"—Nay, more than all this, and beſides what was before mentioned of the aſtoniſhing power with which he was endowed, even to the raiſing of the dead, which none but omnipotence itſelf could ever accompliſh; his wonderful prophecies concerning what would befall himſelf, his apoſtles and followers, the whole Jewiſh polity, temple and nation;—his declaration of the terms of eternal life;—his promiſe of the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon his apoſtles after his aſcenſion into Heaven; &c. &c. which

* Perhaps theſe paſſages from St. Paul may be objected to, as being teſtimonies of Jeſus Chriſt after his exaltation. True, but they were given by one who well underſtood our Lord's character; and evidently alluded to his life and doctrine while he was among men, and to his great reward in conſequence of his obedience and ſufferings.

things

things ſurely muſt denote his being in the likeneſs, image, or form of God, or nothing can; and which really belong to the character of the only-begotten Son of God, who was in the boſom (or ſecret counſel) of the Father, without ſo much as a ſingle idea of an exiſtence prior to his miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin!— This ſame Jeſus, I ſay, did not, on account of any, or of all the above moſt ſingular and wonderful particulars, ever aſſume the character of Deity; neither did he make any boaſt of this his form of God; nor ſeek the praiſes and adoration of men; but on the contrary, did truly leſſen, humble, and empty himſelf, and take upon himſelf the form of a ſervant. Hear once more his ſubmiſſive language, "I muſt work the "works of him that ſent me — Verily, "verily, I ſay unto you, the Son can do "nothing of himſelf." To which may be added, "My Father is greater than I." And in his ſolemn addreſs to God, but a little before that greateſt of all humiliating ſcenes, his unjuſt condemnation, and in conſequence of which his moſt barbarous crucifixion, his words are, "I have finiſh-"ed the work which thou gaveſt me to "do."

Again, the humble Jeſus did empty, or

diveſt himſelf of the form of God, when he replied to the young ruler, "Why "calleſt thou me good? there is none "good (i, e. abſolutely good) but one "God." And then directed him to keep the Commandments which the Lord had given by Moſes; and to take up the croſs, and follow him. See Mark x. 21. And when he, who had ſuch divine power communicated to him, that not only the winds and the ſeas, but even all nature was ſubject unto him, yet ſubmitted to the indigent ſtate of not having where to lay his head.

St. John hath given us a very remarkable inſtance of Chriſt's humility; though *Bereanus* makes light of it, and, I think, argues thereon in a very trifling manner—He ſays, "The fickle multitude was indeed "diſpoſed, in a tranſient fit of admiration, "to have advanced him to regal dignity. But "what would the zeal of an unarmed croud "have availed againſt the courage and diſci-"pline of the Roman legions? Had he "yielded to their vain deſires, deſtruction "muſt ſoon have overwhelmed him, and "his deluded adherents." P. 141. Thus hath *Bereanus*, with only the ſhadow of reaſon, made the conduct of Jeſus Chriſt merely prudential, even to avoid being overwhelmed in deſtruction.

However

However let us examine the account which the Evangeliſt gives us of the matter. It is as follows: "Jeſus went over "the ſea of *Galilee*, and a great multitude "followed him, and he went up into a "mountain with his diſciples; there he mi-"raculouſly fed, with five barley loaves and "two ſmall fiſhes, about five thouſand peo-"ple; the conſequence of which was, that "thoſe men, when they had ſeen the "miracle that Jeſus did, ſaid, This is of "a truth that Prophet who ſhould come "into the world." Then it follows, "when Jeſus therefore perceived that "they would come and take him by force, "to make him a king, he departed again "into a mountain himſelf alone." See John ch. vi.

Here then, we have a moſt ſtriking example of the humility of the bleſſed Jeſus; who far from affecting pomp, parade, and grandeur, gave the miſtaken Jews a moſt important, though ſilent, inſtruction, that his views were by no means worldly. And this will evidently appear by purſuing the hiſtory a little further, which informs us, that the day following, the people came again where Jeſus was; who rebuked them for their want of attention to the end and deſign of the miracle he had ſo lately

wrought among them; and then proceeded to exhort them, "not to labour for the "meat which periſheth; but for that meat "which endureth unto everlaſting life, "which the Son of man ſhall give you; "for him hath God the Father ſealed." Was not this an inſtance of humility? for he rejected the offer of the higheſt worldly honour.

Further, How frequently did our Lord ſay, when he performed miraculous cures, "See that ye let no man know it!"

And what an amazing inſtance of his humiliation did he give his diſciples, when he, who was their Lord and maſter, girded himſelf, and waſhed their feet!

How ſubmiſſive too was his anſwer when Pilate ſaid to him, "— Knoweſt "thou not that I have power to crucify "thee, and have power to releaſe thee?" Jeſus replied, "Thou couldeſt have no "power at all againſt me, except it were "given thee from above!"

With what amazing patience likewiſe did he, to fulfil his divine miſſion, ſubmit to be mocked, buffeted, and ſpit upon! And in his laſt ſcene of ſuffering, his language was only this, "It is finiſhed."— "Father, into thy hands I commit my "ſpirit." If any thing could exceed this, it was that prayer, which did indeed complete

plete his beneficent character; "Father, "forgive them, for they know not what "they do *."

* *Bereanus* inſinuates, that our Lord's exerciſing miraculous powers had no connection with his being in the form of God, and his humility; for he ſays, p. 136, "This, however, appears to me, not to have been the "thing deſigned by St. Paul. He ſpeaks of our Lord's "being in the form of God, before he was in the condi-"tion of man." And in the next page, he ſays "—By "*the form of God*, St. Paul appears not to have intended "a power of working miracles, becauſe he repreſents our "Saviour as diveſting himſelf of it." And a little lower, "But our Lord did not diveſt himſelf of miraculous pow-"ers. Theſe he retained through the whole courſe of "his miniſtry."

I am apprehenſive, by another view of theſe things, it will be found that *Bereanus* hath greatly miſtook, or ſadly perverted the matter before us; for it cannot be denied, that the power of working miracles, with which our Lord was endowed, did, in that particular, conſtitute his being in *the form of God*. And this *form* the bleſſed Jeſus did empty himſelf of when he entered upon that grand and finiſhing ſcene of his humiliation, viz. *his ſufferings*; which, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, were his humiliation. For after his healing the ear of the high prieſt's ſervant, his miraculous power was no more exerciſed till he was riſen again from the dead, and had *all power given unto him in heaven and in earth*. We therefore ſay, our Lord did empty himſelf of the form of God, when he conſented to the withdrawment of miraculous powers; for let us but attend to his own words, which will ſurely put the matter quite out of debate. "Thinkeſt thou that I cannot now pray to my Fa-"ther, and he ſhall give me more than twelve legions of "Angels; but how then ſhall the Scriptures be fulfilled, "that thus it muſt be?" Mat. xxvi. 53, 54.—And, if poſſible, more clearly yet, "This is your hour, and the power "of darkneſs." Luke xxii. 53. Thus we ſee how our Lord Jeſus Chriſt did empty himſelf of *the form of God*, take upon him the form of a ſervant, or ſlave, and, in his humiliation, *become obedient, even unto the death of the croſs*.

But how any thing in all this behaviour can, with the leaſt propriety, be ſaid to point out his pre-exiſtence, I confeſs I am thereunto an abſolute ſtranger. And as to the aſcribing to him the poſſeſſion of ſuch other divine characters, which cannot in any ſenſe belong but to Deity alone, and about which the Scriptures are altogether ſilent, notwithſtanding ſome are fond of beſtowing them ſo laviſhly upon him; I intirely agree, and join with *Bereanus*, when he ſays, "It "ſubverts the very foundation of true re- "ligion, viz. the unity of God; and "contradicteth the plain declarations of "holy Scripture, recorded in the follow- "ing places, John xvii. 3. 1 Cor. viii. 6. "Eph. iv. 6." See p. 134. And as I find no ſuch aſcriptions in the ſacred writings, I cannot ſuppoſe, wherever the defenders of ſuch doctrines picked them up, they are once to be admitted as a rule of faith to Chriſtians.

No one, ſurely, will be ſo daring as to deny, that Omnipotence could produce a being of our ſpecies, out of the ordinary courſe of his own appointment; and that he could, in a more intimate and peculiar manner be preſent with him than he is with his other creatures, by granting to him ſuch wonderful endowments as none

other

other ever experienced, and ſuch as were directly ſuited to the performance of his own good pleaſure. Now this, we are informed by the Evangeliſts, was really the caſe of the man Chriſt Jeſus—He was born of a virgin; had the ſpirit of God without meaſure, performing thereby the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles; and, by his divine doctrine, put to ſilence the wicked and captious Jews, inſtructed mankind in the way to everlaſting life. Theſe things he did, for God was with him.

Therefore there is not the leaſt neceſſity for him to have been in a pre-exiſtent ſtate, in order to make known the will of God to us, as we now have it in the ſacred books of the New Teſtament—to enable him to perform his numerous miracles, as ſo many convincing proofs of the power of God reſiding in him—and to bear thoſe unparalleled ſufferings which he did, in teſtimony of his obedience to the will of God, and his tender compaſſion to the ſouls of men.

Beſides, to ſuppoſe that our Lord left a pre-exiſtent ſtate of glory, and emptied *himſelf*, and became man, would in reality be making him equal with God, making him to aſſume a power which he never did; and which neither reaſon nor revelation

give

give authority, or countenance, to declare any being whatever had the leaſt pretenſion to. But to ſay, "when the fulneſs "of time was come, God ſent forth his "ſon made of a woman;" and that that ſon, although eminently diſtinguiſhed by ſupernatural gifts and beſtowments, did, during the whole courſe of his appointed miniſtry, truly *humble himſelf, and take upon him the form of a ſervant*, is every way agreeable to nature, reaſon, and the tenour of goſpel-hiſtory.

But ſhall I not be aſked "how there "appears any abſurdity in admitting the "pre-exiſtence of Jeſus Chriſt, or how an "aſſent thereto can be withheld; ſince "himſelf hath expreſsly declared, "no "man hath aſcended up to Heaven, but "he that came down from Heaven, [even] "the ſon of man which is in Heaven?" "John iii. 13. Which declaration is ſurely "ſufficient to put to eternal ſilence all ar-"guments urged againſt it, however dif-"ficult it may ſeem for our very ſhallow "reaſoning powers to conceive of or di-"geſt? And upon which text, the late "reverend and ſtudious divine, Dr. Dod-"dridge, hath given the following very "juſt and ingenious paraphraſe,"—"*No "one ever has aſcended up to Heaven, to*

" *ſearch into the ſecret counſels, and to obtain*
" *an intimate and perfect knowledge of the*
" *truths of God; unleſs, as you will ſee here-*
" *after, he has done it, who is really de-*
" *ſcended from Heaven; even the ſon of man*
" *who is in Heaven, as there is the place of*
" *his ſtated abode, whither he will ſhortly*
" *return, and as he now is preſent there by*
" *his divine nature, which fills both Heaven*
" *and Earth.*" Fam. Expoſ. vol. I. p. 164.

Notwithſtanding the Doctor's abilities; ſome may be tempted to cry out, Was there ever ſuch language as this? What, did this Son of Man, who was in a pre-exiſtent ſtate of glory in the preſence of the Father, aſcend up to Heaven to ſearch into the ſecret counſels? &c. Then it ſhould ſeem, he was not there from all eternity; or he would have had none occaſion for aſcending up to Heaven. And that it was his human nature that *aſcended up to Heaven, to ſearch into the ſecret counſels, and to obtain an intimate and perfect knowledge of the truths of God*, is what I ſuppoſe no one will admit of; and ſurely, that it could not be his ſo much talked-of divine nature is as evident, if we will believe the Doctor, for he tells us, that *he now is preſent there by his divine nature, which fills both Heaven and Earth.*

Now

Now can that which was not always in Heaven, be ſaid to aſcend up to Heaven, come down from Heaven, and yet be in Heaven, nay, fill both Heaven and Earth? One may well adopt here the language of Nicodemus, and ſay, "How can theſe things be?"

Indeed, the arguments generally made uſe of in ſupport of the *double nature* of Jeſus Chriſt, puts me in mind of Milton's expreſſion,

"Confuſion worſe confounded." Par. Loſt. B. 2. l. 996.

Yet that Jeſus Chriſt, the ſon of man, did come down from Heaven, is nevertheleſs true—though in no other ſenſe, than as he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin by the ſole and immediate power of the God of Heaven; and being by him appointed and commiſſioned to fulfil and execute his divine good pleaſure, even the ſalvation of man. And to this *bread of life which came down from Heaven*, did God his Father bear teſtimony at his baptiſm; at his transfiguration; whereof St. Peter ſpeaks expreſsly, 1 Peter i. 17, 18; by his continual preſence with him, enabling him to perform ſuch miracles, and to teach ſuch heavenly doctrines, as no other man had ever done, &c. &c.

And as to the expreſſion, "who is in

"Heaven,"

"Heaven," ſuffice it to obſerve, the evident meaning and ſignification is preciſely the ſame with that of the Apoſtle Paul, when he writes to the Philippians, where the very phraſe, *is in Heaven*, is made uſe of, "Brethren, be followers together of "me, and mark them which walk ſo, as "ye have us for an example—for our con-"verſation *is in Heaven*." Ch. iii. 17, 20. that is, our converſation is heavenly, or of things that relate thereto, and are preparative to the attainment thereof. And truly, ſuch only was the end of our Lord's converſation upon earth during the days of his miniſtry.

Therefore this remarkable declaration "no man hath aſcended up to Heaven, "but he that came down from Heaven, "even the ſon of man who is in Heaven," will by no means prove, the true and proper divinity of the man Chriſt Jeſus—No, nor his pre-exiſtence.

So likewiſe that other phraſe, "thou "lovedſt me before the foundation of the "world." John xvii. 24. Upon which, great ſtreſs hath always been laid by the advocates for our Lord's pre-exiſtence, but cannot be any ſupport thereof; being expreſſive only of the omniſcience of the one Supreme, with whom a thouſand years

are

are as one day; and declarative of his eternal love and regard to holineſs and obedience. After the ſame manner, and inculcating the very ſame ſentiment, does the Apoſtle Paul write to the Epheſians, "—He hath "choſen us in him before the foundation "of the world, * that we ſhould be holy "and without blame before him in love." Ch. i. 4.

Indeed, *Bereanus* makes a mighty ſtir about the phraſeology of "the glory which "I had with thee before the world was;" John xvii. 5. and "inherit the kingdom "*prepared* for you, from the foundation "of the world." Matt. xxv. 34. ſee p. 147. But this, I am firmly perſuaded, he never would have done, had he viewed the two paſſages through any other medium than that of the pre-exiſtence.

Give me leave alſo to add, the hypotheſis of our Lord's pre-exiſtence is not, in my opinion at leaſt, ſupported by that, which is looked upon as a fundamental text, in proof that he did enjoy a ſtate of glory in the heavenly world before his miraculous conception: I mean, John xvii. 5. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me "with thine own ſelf, with the glory

* The Greek is exactly the ſame in both places.

"which

" which I had with thee before the world " was."

Is it not ſomething wonderful, if Jeſus, through his unbounded love and benevolence to mankind, did really diveſt and empty himſelf of heavenly glory, and appear in the form of a ſervant, purely to inſtruct and ſhew to men the unerring path to everlaſting life and happineſs; and who unremittingly purſued that divine plan, though conſtantly attended with ſtubborn prejudice, reproach, envy, and perſecution, and at laſt with the loſs of life itſelf, in the moſt ignominious and painful manner; I ſay, is it not wonderful, that when he was in the near view of that dreadful finiſhing ſcene, he ſhould not addreſs his heavenly Father, in whom he truſted, to the following purpoſe; " As I have faithfully " finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me " to do, and am juſt about to perform the " moſt trying act of ſubmiſſion to thy " will; I return unto thee again, claim- " ing, from thy divine love and infinite " juſtice, the glory which I had with thee " before the world was, even the glory of " thine own ſelf?" Whereas, on the contrary, the text repreſents him earneſtly praying the Father, who had once and again declared, " This is my beloved Son,

" in

" in whom I am always well pleaſed," that as he had glorified him on earth, ſo his Father would now glorify him with his own ſelf, by giving him the glory, which, in the eternal ſcheme, it was intended he ſhould have, and was ordained and appointed for him before the world was.

Bereanus, p. 146, &c. ſays, upon this very text, "—No words are better calcu-
" lated to inform us, that he was poſſeſſed
" of glory before his incarnation. Another
" ſenſe, indeed, hath been put upon them,
" by ſome learned men, who ſuppoſe our
" Lord prays to be exalted, not to any
" glory which he had with God before
" the world was, but to that glory which
" God intended he ſhould have with him,
" or to the glory which he might be ſaid
" to have had in the divine decree. This,
" it is too plain to be denied, is far from
" being the natural and obvious meaning
" of our Saviour's words."

Bereanus may ſay whatever he pleaſes; but I am well ſatisfied the above interpretation is agreeable both to right reaſon, and the whole tenor of the Goſpel hiſtory; and, that it does really give " the natural
" and obvious meaning of our Saviour's
" words."

And that it was not a pre-exiſtent, but a ſubſequent

ſubſequent glory for which Chriſt prayed, as a recompence of his perfect obedience and philanthropy, is abundantly illuſtrated by that fine parable of the prodigal ſon, Luke xv. where it is ſaid, Ver. 31. "Son, "thou art ever with me, and all that I "have *is* thine," that is, all that I have *will*, or *is to be*, thine. Some of the learned, indeed, are for reading the verſe, interrogatively, thus, Son, art thou ever with me? Is all that I have thine? But I confeſs, I cannot ſo view it; for thereby, the deſign and energy of the text is altered and debaſed; and the glorious character of the father tarniſhed. He is repreſented, kind, beneficent, and forgiving;—not harſhly rebuking, but mildly entreating his elder ſon to partake of the new and unexpected joy: and his remonſtrance runs only in the eaſy ſtile of "It was meet that we ſhould "make merry, and be glad; for this thy "brother was dead, and is alive again; and "was loſt, and is found."

And if we look back to Ver. 12, "and "he divided unto them his living," we ſhall ſee the propriety of the Father's ſaying, "all that I have *is* thine." For ſo it was in reality, though only in reverſion.

Our Lord hath alſo given another inſtruction, by which I apprehend the above

 interpre-

interpretation is juſtified, namely, "Verily, "verily I ſay unto you, he that heareth "my word, and believeth on him that ſent "me, *hath* everlaſting life, and ſhall not "come into condemnation; but *is paſſed* "from death unto life." John v. 25 *. And this change of the preſent tenſe for the future, in order to expreſs *certainty*, is ſeen in Iſaiah ix. 6. "Unto us a child *is* born, "i. e. *ſhall be* born."

I come now to take notice of another paſſage of ſcripture, which, as *Bereanus* ſays, bears a conſiderable reſemblance to, "who "being in the form of God, emptied him-"ſelf, and took the form of a ſervant, "&c." It is this, "For ye know the grace "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, though "he was rich, yet for your ſakes became "poor, that ye through his poverty might "become rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. Upon which, *Bereanus* thus comments: "St. Paul, "in theſe words, appears to me to refer to "our Lord's exiſtence in a ſtate of glory "and happineſs in the celeſtial realms, be-"fore his appearance in this world. This "might with great propriety be ſtiled "riches—" p. 139.

Will *Bereanus* deny that our Lord was rich, whilſt he was in this our world?

* See alſo Gal. iv. 1.

Had he not, in conſequence of having the ſpirit of God, his Father, upon him, all nature at his command? And did he not at proper ſeaſons exerciſe his divine power; though without any parade, or oſtentation? Did he not inculcate humility on his diſciples by his own example, when he ſaid to them, "Whoſoever will be chief among "you, let him be your ſervant. Even as "the ſon of man came not to be mi-"niſtered unto, but to miniſter, and to "give his life a ranſom for many?" Matt. xxi. 27, 28.

Had not Chriſt then true riches,—and did he not, for our ſakes, humble himſelf, and, as it were, become poor? Nay, he was literally poor, not having wherewith to pay the tribute-money, without working a miracle. See Matt. xxvii. 27. And had not where to lay his head. Conſider alſo in what manner he delivered his doctrines, and performed his miracles; it was only in the form of a ſervant. "I muſt preach "the kingdom of God,—for therefore am "I ſent." Luke iv. 43. "My doctrine is "not mine, but his that ſent me." John vii. 16. "I muſt work the works of him that "ſent me." John ix. 4.

I am apprehenſive, that *Bereanus* thinks he hath obtained a conſiderable victory,

when he aſks, in p. 142. "in what in-
"ſtances did our Lord manifeſt his hu-
"mility and grace, in which his apoſtles
"did not diſcover theirs? Did he ſubmit
"to contempt and reproach? They like-
"wiſe were accounted the filth of the
"world, and the offscouring of all things.
"—Did he give up any temporal advan-
"tages? He never poſſeſſed any. Where-
"as ſome of them gave up their all, and
"forfeited the favour of the great and
"learned, which they had enjoyed.—Was
"our Lord expoſed to want, to ſcourging,
"and a painful ignominious death? And
"did not they ſuffer *frequently*, hunger
"and nakedneſs, impriſonment and ſtripes,
"and at laſt expire in diſgrace and tor-
"ment?"

Thus hath he drawn a compariſon be-tween Chriſt and his apoſtles—and, in ſome reſpects, given them the advantage; for in p. 143, he ſays, "—their labours "were continued *longer*, and their ſuffer-"ings more *numerous* than his." I almoſt wonder, he did not aſſert, they were greater too. And in order to ſupport the pre-exiſtent ſcheme, you find he chuſes, as he thinks it ſuits him, to oppoſe *poverty*, to worldly wealth and opulence.

He obſerves, in p. 139, "There ſeems

"no

" no propriety in ſaying, though he was " rich in miraculous gifts, yet he became " poor; ſince there is no connection be- " twixt thoſe extraordinary endowments " and wealth, nor any oppoſition between " them and low circumſtances in the pre- " ſent life. Miraculous powers have gene- " rally been conferred upon perſons in low " ſtations—" —And in the next page he ſays, " If the apoſtle meaneth no more than " that our Lord was endowed with mi- " raculous powers, his language might be " reverſed. It might with more propriety " be ſaid, who though he was poor, yet " became rich, ſince he was deſcended " from very poor parents, and lived a " conſiderable time expoſed to the hard- " ſhips of poverty, before he was inveſted " with miraculous gifts." And then with a kind of archneſs in triumph, adds, " Such " an expreſſion would, no doubt, have " a ſtrange ſound, becauſe it requires un- " common penetration to diſcover any " grace in a poor man's becoming rich. " It might, however, with ſtrict truth, be " applied to Jeſus, if he was not rich in " heavenly glory, before his coming into " the world." p. 140.

However, notwithſtanding this affected parade, there certainly ought to be no com-

pariſon made between Chriſt and his apoſtles; as they were not in any reſpect, in perfectly ſimilar circumſtances. I ſuppoſe, by his language, when he aſks, "Did "not they, (i. e. the apoſtles) ſuffer *frequently* hunger and nakedneſs, impriſonment and ſtripes, and at laſt expire in "diſgrace and torment!" he had his eye upon Heb. xi. 36. and onward; if ſo, I would adviſe *Bereanus* to review the text with a little more attention; and then he will find, St. Paul is there ſpeaking of ſuch as had not received the promiſe. That is, as I underſtand it, of thoſe holy and pious perſons who ſuffered for righteouſneſs ſake before the manifeſtation of the promiſed Meſſiah; and therefore they only knew and received him through faith.

But although the apoſtles themſelves did indeed greatly ſuffer, and although they were poor and diſtreſſed; yet, as I ſaid before, they were not ſo ſingularly circumſtanced as their Lord and Maſter was. Which of them was of old propheſied of as the Meſſiah was? Were they ever called God's only-begotten and well-beloved ſons, in whom he was always well pleaſed? Was the conception of any of them like his? Had they the ſpirit of God without meaſure? Did they know the ſecret counſels

ſels of the Lord, ſo that they might be ſaid to be in the boſom of the Father? Were they intimately acquainted with the whole plan of Providence reſpecting the ſalvation of mankind? Or did any of them receive ſuch amazing atteſtations of the divine preſence, as our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt did? Were none of the views of the apoſtles of a worldly complexion; did they never ſtrive for pre-eminence, or ſeek for grandeur and preferment? It is pity, that before *Bereanus* had drawn his compariſon, he had not caſt his eye upon Mark x. 35—45. Luke ix. 46. xxii. 24. John v. 19—28.

I would by no means depreciate the character of our Lord's apoſtles, but I dare not put them upon a level with the divine and humble Jeſus. For which of them did equal their bleſſed Maſter, in love to mankind? Since, even that great apoſtle, St. Paul, hath told us, that it "paſſeth "knowledge." Eph. iii. 19. Therefore *Bereanus*'s queſtion is uſeleſs, which aſks, in p. 143, "—Can it, after all, be thought, "our Saviour gave no other, no ſtronger "proof of his love, than St. Paul and "other apoſtles gave of their love?"

Yes, we have ſeen he did; though with-

out leading us to a view, or belief of his pre-exiſtence.

As a further ſupport to the pre-exiſtent ſcheme, *Bereanus* obſerves, in p. 145. that "our Lord in ſeveral places ſpeaks of "himſelf as having been in Heaven, and "coming down from Heaven, John vi. 38. "*For I came down from Heaven, not to do* "*my own will, &c.* The Jews underſtood "his expreſſions of this kind in their literal "ſenſe, and were enraged at him, who "appeared no more than a man, for pre-"tending he had been in Heaven."

Very true, the Jews, tho' uſed to the figure, were ſo blind, and ſo obſtinate, that they took our Lord's expreſſions of this kind in their literal ſenſe; as they likewiſe did his evidently figurative declaration," Deſtroy this temple, and in three "days I will raiſe it up." John ii. 19. And were ſhamefully criminal in ſo doing.—But it ſeems yet more aſtoniſhing, that *Bereanus* (the profeſſed enquirer, whether thoſe things were ſo?) ſhould, with his Teſtament in his hand, unhappily fall into the ſame abſurdity! I ſay, the ſame abſurdity; for in p. 144, he ſays, "He "muſt have exiſted long before his in-"carnation." And in his paraphraſe, be-

fore

fore mentioned, he ſays, he " diveſted " himſelf of his glory, aſſumed huma- " nity in a very mean and low condi- " tion, and being thus brought into the " ſtate of a man"—

Then it muſt be, according to *Bereanus*, that his *human nature* exiſted before he was made of a woman, or that the very *man* Chriſt Jeſus was the Being which came down from Heaven.

And yet, I ſuppoſe he would be much ſtartled at the idea of literally eating the fleſh of the ſon of man, and drinking his blood, in order to obtain everlaſting life; notwithſtanding the expreſs words of Chriſt are, " Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, except " ye eat the fleſh of the ſon of man, " and drink his blood, ye have no life " in you: whoſo eateth my fleſh, and " drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, " and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day. " For my fleſh is meat indeed, and my " blood is drink indeed. He that eateth " my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, dwell- " eth in me, and I in him. As the liv- " ing Father hath ſent me, and I live by " the Father; ſo he that eateth me, even " he ſhall live by me." John vi. 53—57, which words are as plain and expreſs as thoſe which follow, " This is the bread

" which

" which came down from Heaven." And again, " — he that came down from Hea-" ven, (even) the ſon of man.—And I " am the door of the ſheep. John x. 9.—" I am the way. Ch. xiv. 6.—I am the " true vine." Ch. xv. 1.

Now if any one of the above declarations muſt be taken in the literal ſenſe, why not all? But, that they are ſo to be underſtood, let reaſon, or that Spirit of man, which is the candle of the Lord, determine. How then did Jeſus Chriſt *literally* come down from Heaven, empty himſelf of the form of God, and become man? Or does any of the above texts really prove his perſonal pre-exiſtence?*

He who can believe, that the very man Chriſt Jeſus, who was born of the Virgin, had an actual being in Heaven, in the preſence of his Father, before that period, hath no good argument, in my opinion, to deny TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

And let me add, that according to the letter, or without a figure, it is abſolutely

* *Bereanus* ſays, " Greater merit cannot be conceived " of, than was diſplayed in this event." P. 153. Has he proved the event? No. But however, we ſay, there could be no merit, in an exalted intelligent being conſenting to be diveſted of all his powers, loſe his underſtanding and knowledge, in order to have an infant mind gradually opened. It is a burleſque on the conſtitution of truth, nature, and God.

impoſſible

impoſſible to reconcile "*I and my Father are* "*one—he that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the* "*Father—I am in the Father, and the* "*Father in me*;" with "*My Father is* "*greater than I—Neither came I of my-* "*ſelf, but he ſent me.—My doctrine is not* "*mine, but his that ſent me:*" Alſo what St. John in his own perſon ſaith, 1 John iv. 12. "*No man hath ſeen God at any time*, with what he ſays, Ver. 15. *Whoſoever* "*ſhall confeſs that Jeſus is the Son of God,* "*God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*"

Give me leave yet to obſerve farther; No one ſurely, in his ſober ſenſes, can poſſibly conceive the words of St. John, Ch. i. 18. "—the only begotten ſon, who "is in the boſom of the Father—" ought to be acknowledged, or underſtood, in their groſs and literal meaning.

Bereanus, in p. 143, takes particular notice of the love of God, in ſending our Saviour into the world. John iii. 16. "God "ſo loved the world, that he gave his "only begotten ſon," &c. And has this remark thereon, in which he ſeems not a little to exult—he ſays, "A conſiderable "ſtreſs appears to be laid upon the terms, "*only-begotten ſon*; and if our Lord en- "joyed glory and happineſs in the pre- "ſence of God in Heaven, and was an

"object

" object of his affection and delight, it " was amazing benevolence indeed, in the " Supreme Being, to ſend him into the " world; and give him up to ſuffering and " death for our Salvation, and ought to " be celebrated for ever in the warmeſt " ſtrains of gratitude and praiſe."

Who is there, but ought moſt thankfully to acknowledge the boundleſs benevolence of the Supreme Being, in ſending a Saviour into the world? Yet, that Saviour's being ſtiled, *his only-begotten ſon*, is no proof that he enjoyed glory and happineſs in the preſence of God in Heaven, before his being ſo ſent into the world.—And by the manner in which *Bereanus* hath remarked upon the *ſtreſs* laid on the terms, *only-begotten ſon*, it ſeems to have ſlipt his memory, that notwithſtanding the truth of the fact, that Jeſus was the only begotten ſon, as conceived in the womb of the Virgin, by the immediate power of God; yet, the phraſe is a perfect Hebraiſm.

He cannot but know, that according to the Jewiſh idiom, Pſ. lxxxix. 27. " —I will make him (my) firſt-born; " higher than the kings of the earth;" ſignifies, I will make him the greateſt and moſt glorious Prince. So when Bildad, ſpeaking

ſpeaking of the miſerable condition of the wicked, ſays, "—The firſt-born of death "ſhall devour his ſtrength." Job xviii. 13. The meaning is, the moſt lamentable and diſaſtrous death ſhall deſtroy him. Therefore, when our Lord appeared among men, and had the ſpirit of God reſiding in him, he might, according to the Jewiſh phraſeology, be rightly and truly ſtiled, his *only-begotten ſon*; and moreover, that he "*came* "*down from Heaven:*" That is, in like manner, and in the ſame figurative language, as the Lord is ſaid to have deſcended in fire upon Mount Sinai. Exod. xix. 18.—Moſes likewiſe uſes the ſame kind of ſpeech, when he delivered the commandment, "It is not in Heaven, that "thou ſhouldeſt ſay, who ſhall go up for "us to Heaven to bring it to us—" Deut. xxx. 12. and which St. Paul hath alſo quoted. Rom. x. 6. David likewiſe ſays, "God is gone up with a ſhout, the Lord "with the voice of a trumpet." Pſalm xlvii. 5.

I would give the terms *only begotten-ſon*, their utmoſt ſtreſs; and do with thankfulneſs acknowledge the gracious benignity of the one ſupreme Being, in ſending his only-begotten ſon into the world, and giving him up to ſuffering and death to become

become the mediator between God and man, or that we through him might be reconciled unto God — which aſſuredly *ought to be celebrated for ever in the warmeſt ſtrains of gratitude and praiſe*; but I ſee not, that thoſe terms, *only-begotten ſon*, at all prove our Lord's having enjoyed a pre-exiſtent ſtate of glory and happineſs in the preſence of God in Heaven, or that the text will lead us to infer any ſuch thing. It is well known, that according to Scripture-language, *only-begotten*, *well-beloved*, *firſt-born*, and the like equivalent terms, point out to us no other than the ſuperlative. See amongſt a great number of texts, beſides thoſe juſt above mentioned, "I was my Father's ſon, tender and *only* "*beloved* in the ſight of my mother." Prov. iv. 3. "I have given the *dearly-beloved* of "my ſoul into the hands of her enemies." Jer. xii. 7. And, what ſhould be much attended to, "—Thus ſaith the Lord, "Iſrael "is my ſon, even my FIRST-BORN." Exod. iv. 22. See alſo in the parable of the vineyard, "having yet therefore *one* ſon, his "*well-beloved*—" Mark xii. 6. And thus may Jeſus Chriſt, for the ſake of his doctrine, &c. being the moſt excellent which was ever given to man, be truly ſtiled the only-begotten ſon, beſides his being ſo called

called (as before mentioned) on account of his miraculous conception.

I muſt yet take notice of another character given to our Lord, namely, that of his being an example unto us, from his being rewarded for his obedience.

"Jeſus being found in faſhion as a man, "or if you pleaſe, in condition as a man, "he humbled himſelf*, and became obe- "dient unto death, even the death of the "croſs. Wherefore God alſo hath highly "exalted him, and given him a name "which is above every name; that at (or "in) the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould "bow, of things in Heaven, and things "in earth, and things under the earth," &c. Phil. ii. 8—10. That is, every creature ſhould be obedient to the will of God, even as Chriſt was.

"Thou haſt loved righteouſneſs and "hated iniquity, therefore God, thy God, "hath anointed thee with the oil of glad- "neſs above thy fellows." Heb. i. 9. "The God of our fathers raiſed up Jeſus, "whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree. "Him God hath exalted with his right

* Pleaſe to obſerve, the text does not ſay, he humbled himſelf, and became a man; but being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf. A direct intimation that his humility had no place *before*, but *after* he was a man.

"hand

" hand † to be a Prince and a Saviour, for " to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgive- " neſs of ſins." Acts v. 30, 31. Again, " —was heard in that he feared; though he " were a ſon, yet learned he obedience, by " the things which he ſuffered; and being " made perfect, he became the author of " eternal ſalvation unto all them that obey " him." Heb. v. 7—9. " He is likewiſe " called the author, (or leader on) and " finiſher of our faith, who for the joy " that was ſet before him, endured the " croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet " down at the right hand of the throne of " God." Ch. xii. 2. " And we, if we be " found faithful and obedient, *mortifying* " *the deeds of the body*, ſhall likewiſe be " called children, and heirs of God, even " joint-heirs with Chriſt; if ſo be that " we ſuffer with him, &c." See Rom. viii. 17.

Thus we ſee the Lord Jeſus Chriſt repreſented and offered to us as a pattern and example for our imitation in obedience, humility and ſuffering. Conſult the following texts, viz. John xiii. 15. Rom. xv. 5. 1 Pet. ii. 21. and onward.

Now, if Jeſus Chriſt was not truly and

† Another Hebraiſm.

properly

properly a man, which both the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament declare him to have been, for as Moſes expreſſeth himſelf concerning this matter, "The Lord "thy God will raiſe up unto thee a prophet "from the midſt of thee of thy brethren, "like unto me; unto him ye ſhall hearken." Deut. xviii. 15. And the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, ſays, he "was in "all points tempted as we are, *yet* without ſin." Ch. iv. 15. Which paſſages evidently ſhew, that he was here in a ſtate of trial and probation, and was made "perfect through ſufferings." Ch. ii. 10.—I ſay, if Jeſus Chriſt was not truly and properly a man, but a being of ſuperior nature to ours, he could not poſſibly be circumſtanced as we are; and therefore in no reſpect could he be accounted a copy and precedent to us. No; ſuch conduct ought never to be attributed to the ſupreme Being, but is directly contrary to the wiſdom, rectitude, and perfection of that rule of government which he exerciſeth over his rational and moral creation. But if, on the other hand, our Lord was really a man as we are, and conſequently not preexiſtent, but, in the fulneſs of time, being made of a woman, &c. was ſent forth from God his Father on the moſt bene-

volent meſſage, even that of the redemption for mankind, he was therefore *free*, either to fulfil his divine miſſion, or to refuſe a compliance;—"for imperfection and peccability are involved in the very nature "of a free agent, tho' even ſo highly advanced in the rank of created beings." See the Being and Attributes of God demonſtrated, by H. Knight, A. M. p. 226; and again, "It is elegantly ſaid in the book "of Job, Ch. iv. 18, *he putteth no truſt "in his ſervants, and his angels he chargeth "with folly:* their underſtandings, though "vaſtly large, are not infinite; their natural capacity is improved to a very high "meaſure of knowledge, by their ſtanding "always in the preſence of God, and receiving his inſtructions. Yet it is inſufficient for the government of the world, "and direction of its affairs; which God "hath reſerved in his own hands; committing nothing to the contrivance of "his ableſt miniſters, (they are only employed to execute his orders) becauſe of "their imperfection in wiſdom." See Diſcourſes concerning the Being and natural Perfections of God. By J. Abernethy, M. A. vol. i. p. 332. I ſay then, if our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was really a man as we are, the ſcriptures are true; and we have, in

him

him, a moſt glorious pattern and example ſet before us, of love, humility, patience, and obedience.

But the maintainers of the pre-exiſtence have ſomething further to urge in ſupport of, and to give countenance to their ſcheme, that Chriſt had actually a being before his conception in the womb of the Virgin, for they will yet aſk the following queſtion, namely, Muſt not that expreſs declaration, made in Iſa. lxiii. 9. "In all their afflic-"tion he was afflicted, (which agrees with "his being a man of ſorrows and ac-"quainted with grief—ſurely he hath "borne our griefs—and carried our ſorrows "—ch. liii. 3, 4.) and the angel of his "preſence ſaved them; in his love and in "his pity he redeemed them—" muſt not this be applied to Jeſus Chriſt, the redeemer of his people?—Not unleſs the *two* angels, who were ſent to redeem or ſave Lot from the deſtruction which was immediately to come upon wicked Sodom, Gen. xix.—alſo *thouſands* of angels, among whom the Lord is, as mentioned by David, Pſ. lxviii. 17.—And the angel that came to Zacharias, to foretell the birth of his ſon John, the harbinger of our Lord; and who alſo appeared to the Virgin, informing

him of the miraculous conception of Jeſus which was ſoon to take place; See Luke i. 13, 31, and onward, can be ſo applied. But as they cannot, the idea is abſurd. Beſides, it muſt be remembered, the redemption is not aſcribed, by Iſaiah, to the angel, but to the Lord Jehovah; for he it was who redeemed Iſrael out of the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deut. vii. 8. And to that the prophet alluded. See alſo Exod. xxiii. 20—xxxiii. 2.

I ſhall be yet told, there is a very diſtinguiſhing meaning in the words *Angel of his preſence*.

No more, in my opinion, is there here to be underſtood, than inſtead of expreſſing a ſpecial meſſenger of God, to ſignify and declare his will and purpoſe, by the more uſual and ſingle appellation *Angel*, it is, in a great number of places, in order to heighten the authority of the meſſage, written, "*the angel of the Lord*," or "*the angel of God*"—Thus, to increaſe the ſolemnity and importance of the meſſage, and to command the greater attention, the angel that appeared to Zacharias ſaid, "*I am Gabriel that ſtand in the preſence of God.*" And I ſhould ſuppoſe it will not be very eaſily credited, that this ſame Gabriel was

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt himſelf—and that he related to Mary the amazing particulars of his own conception.

Permit me yet to obſerve, that if our Lord was co-equal with the Father, or had from all eternity, or even only for a number of ages before the foundation of this our world, a real exiſtence, not only in the preſence, but in the *boſom* of the Father; a term which, by the way, denotes the higheſt poſſible enjoyment—what idea can we rationally form of that expreſſion in his moſt ſolemn addreſs to God "—Glorify thou me " with thine own ſelf—" ſince, to be glorified, is to be raiſed or exalted to an higher degree of dignity? Or what reward was it, to have *a name given to him which is above every name*; or to obtain *a more excellent name than the angels*. See Phil. ii. 9. Heb. i. 4. When that was no more than a reinſtating him in the glory which he before enjoyed; as being the well-beloved, and only-begotten ſon of God, in whom he was always well pleaſed; and which glory he had none occaſion to diveſt himſelf of, but for his unparalleled love to mankind that they might enjoy everlaſting happineſs? Therefore I ſay, if we conſider Jeſus Chriſt as a man, who delivered the moſt glorious doctrine (as commiſſioned by God himſelf)

and

and to ſeal that doctrine with his own blood; as one approved of God, and declared to be his ſon by numerous manifeſtations of his power and preſence with him; then, his exaltation to ſuch a ſtate of glory was the higheſt reward which could be given him, or which it was poſſible for him to receive.

It is ſtrange that any intelligent being ſhould not be ſatisfied in believing that the operations of the one God, creator of heaven and earth, were, in wiſdom and goodneſs to his creatures, diſplayed in the man Chriſt Jeſus; chuſing rather to form to themſelves notions repugnant to right reaſon, unſupported alſo by the ſacred Scriptures. And worldly views, it is to be feared, were the genuine parents, which are ſtill aſſiſted by blind and bigotted ignorance, the foſtering nurſes of the abſurd opinion of Chriſt's pre-exiſtence.

But whoever would ſee the argument judiciouſly and learnedly diſcuſſed, I would refer them to *The true doctrine of the New Teſtament concerning Jeſus Chriſt, conſidered.*

I conclude therefore with this general obſervation, *viz.* That two or three paſſages to be met with in the New Teſtament, which, at firſt ſight, may ſeem to countenance the notion of our Lord's pre-exiſtence; but which nevertheleſs, upon a cloſe and accurate enquiry, will be found, rationally

and

and in connection, to admit of a very different intrepretation, therefore ought never to be deemed ſufficient to invalidate or overthrow thoſe numberleſs plain and indubitable texts, which neceſſarily imply, and are expreſsly declarative of the direct contrary doctrine.

POSTSCRIPT.

Notwithſtanding *Bereanus* is pleaſed, with a kind of acrimonious innuendo, to ſay, in p. 148. "The manner of interpreting ſcripture, to which ſome learned men "have recourſe on this ſubject, if it was "univerſal, would, in my opinion, render "the meaning of the ſacred writers quite "uncertain. It offers ſuch violence to their "language; that all the learning and elo-"quence of its patrons cannot make it ap-"pear juſt and reaſonable;"—and to cloſe his remarks in the following words, "To "conclude; I ſincerely wiſh, that all who "believe the doctrine of our Lord's pre-"exiſtence and humiliation, may experience "the good effects, which it hath a natural "tendency to produce, on their tempers "and lives. As they are ſenſible it de-"monſtrates the grace of God, as well as "the

"the humility and compaſſion of our Sa-
"viour, in the ſtrongeſt light, and thus
"addreſſeth more affectionate motives to
"the heart than the contrary notion: So
"I hope, they will duly regard the pecu-
"liar obligations that are upon them, and
"make it their prevailing concern to diſ-
"tinguiſh themſelves by fervent love and
"gratitude to God and their Redeemer,
"and by chearful, univerſal and perſever-
"ing obedience to the divine will."—
Yet I would not perſuade myſelf his cha-
rity is ſo very contracted, but that he like-
wiſe *ſincerely* wiſhes the everlaſting happi-
neſs of all his fellow-chriſtians who ſhall
alſo *make it their prevailing concern to diſ-
tinguiſh themſelves by fervent love and gra-
titude to God and their Redeemer, and by
chearful univerſal and perſevering obedience to
the divine will*; although they ſhall differ
from him with reſpect to the pre-exiſtence
of Jeſus Chriſt, both *his* and *their* Lord and
Judge.

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